




STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF EARLY LEARNING  
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DATE July 17, 2008

TO: Licensed Child Care Providers  
DEL Licensing Supervisors and Licensing Staff

FROM: Jone M. Bosworth, Director 

SUBJECT: SYRUP OF IPECAC SHORTAGE

As reported by news media and the Washington Poison Center, Syrup of Ipecac is in short supply and may be unavailable at many pharmacies. It is unknown if the shortage is short- or long-term.

This creates a problem for many licensed child care providers for two reasons:

1. Providers are required by DEL rules to keep an unexpired bottle of syrup of Ipecac – a substance used to induce vomiting – on hand in the child care facility in case a child has swallowed a potentially poisonous substance.
2. The Washington Poison Center recommends having Syrup of Ipecac on-hand as an essential part of a home and child care facility first-aid kit.

Until we determine the extent of the shortage, it would not be appropriate to change the Syrup of Ipecac requirement in rule. Yet, we must work together to make sure we can keep Washington's children safe.

For DEL licensing staff:

The Washington Poison Center has issued a statement stating that Syrup of Ipecac is effective up to thirty (30) years after the product has expired<sup>1</sup>. Based on this, DEL will be submitting an Interpretive-Policy Statement to the Office of the Code Reviser stating that DEL licensors should not, until further notice, treat an expired bottle of Syrup of Ipecac as a rule violation.

If a provider has expired Syrup of Ipecac in the child care facility a compliance agreement does **not** need to be created. If a provider does **not** have any Syrup of Ipecac, writing a Compliance Agreement is appropriate. However, on the Compliance Agreement the Licensors must:

1. Note the apparent shortage of Syrup of Ipecac.
2. Together, with the provider, immediately contact the Washington Poison Center about recommended alternatives (Toll-free number: 1-800-222-1222).
3. Indicate on the compliance agreement that both the licensor and the provider have contacted the Washington Poison Center, and what the recommended alternatives were.
4. State a timetable for when the provider should have the alternative.

For licensed child care providers:

Thank you for your willingness to help maintain high standards of safety, and for your continued effort of ensuring Syrup of Ipecac is on hand. If you are experiencing problems finding a supply of Syrup of Ipecac, please communicate this to your licensor.

At any time, you may call the Washington Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222 for help with both an alternative and how to administer the alternative. Follow the Poison Center's instructions before giving the child any substance – including Syrup of Ipecac - to induce the vomiting (inducing vomiting is not recommended in all situations).

DEL will continue to monitor the availability of Syrup of Ipecac and report back information when available.

Thanks again for working together for Washington's children.